



Choosing Food for a Day

Target Audience

Parents and caregivers

Behavior Objectives

Parents and caregivers who participate in this activity will be able to:

- Commit to at least one action to make sure meals and snacks are prepared and served following the food group recommendations.
- Accept that they are role models for the types and amounts of food served to children.

Lesson Overview

 **20-MINUTE ACTIVITY!**

Allow extra time if there are more than 10 participants.

Optional: **Play the Power Panther song** as parents gather.

- As an activity opener, parents finish a sentence from the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ radio script, “Mom Discussing Family’s New Habits,” addressing how they respond to the everyday dilemma of feeding their family.
- Use the mini-poster, *MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You*, to talk about the variety of foods and how much people need for the day.
- Have two parents read out loud the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ radio script, “Mom Discussing Family’s New Habits.” Use the script as a way to talk about actions to take for healthier eating and lifestyle choices.
- To wrap up the session, parents commit to, and record, at least one action they will take to meet a personal goal for one food group. They will write down their action on the *MyPyramid: My Steps to Healthy Eating* worksheet.

Preparing and serving meals and snacks with foods from the different food groups is part of healthy eating.

Materials

- **Optional:** Download the “Power Panther Is Here” song to a CD. Arrange to play it at the beginning of the session.
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_kids_3.html
- **Make nametags.** Use the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ stickers to decorate them.
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_kids.html
- **Print out the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ radio script** “Mom Discussing Family’s New Habits.” www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_tools_2.html
- **Print out the MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You mini-poster.**
www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/miniposter.pdf
- **Make copies of the worksheet, MyPyramid: My Steps to Healthier Eating** (8½" x 11") for each participant.
- **Bring pencils** and paper for parents to use.



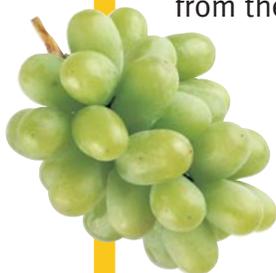
Background Information for Leaders

Use this information to guide your learning activities with parents. It is meant as background for you.

The MyPyramid food guide can help parents choose the foods and amounts that are right for themselves, and their children. The pyramid shows a variety of foods in the food groups: Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, Milk, and Meat & Beans. Choose foods that are mostly lean, low-fat, or fat-free and low in added sugars or other caloric sweeteners. Choose nutrient dense foods; they are often low in calories and packed with nutrients.



The amount needed daily for each food group depends on age, gender, and how physically active people are. The daily recommended amounts from the MyPyramid food groups, for a 2,000 calorie diet, are:



Fruit	2	cups
Vegetables	2½	cups
Milk	3	cups
Meat & Beans	5½	ounces
Grains	6	ounces



Go to www.mypyramid.gov to get information on what amount is considered a cup of milk, or fruits, or vegetables, and how to determine ounces for meat, beans, and grain foods.

Many women may need about 2,000 calories a day. Smaller or less-active women and young children may need fewer calories. Active men and teen boys may need more calories than the 2,000 calories shown above. Eating just a little less or a little more food than you need each day makes a difference over time. Small differences add up and can result in weight gain or weight loss.

The way to healthier eating starts with one simple step at a time. For a personalized plan for healthy eating and for easy ways to make smart choices from every food group, refer to the *MyPyramid Plan* at the following Web site: www.mypyramid.gov

Parents are responsible for offering the *types* and amounts of food to their children. Parents also need to be mindful of *when* foods are offered. Children should be allowed to choose what and how much to eat from the foods and beverages offered. Preparing and serving meals and snacks with enough foods from different food groups is part of healthy eating.

Teaching Activities

Optional: Set a lively tone by playing the “Power Panther Is Here” song as they gather and fill out their name tags.

- 1. Start** by reading the following example about family eating habits, taken from the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ “Mom Discussing Family’s New Habits” radio script. Then, ask the group to finish the sentence from their own experiences. Encourage them to include food decisions in their responses:

I know I need to pay attention to my health, but I just can’t seem to find the time. Between rushing to work and taking care of the kids, there’s not much time left over for me. So I decided to ...

- **Give everyone a chance** to finish the sentence, either aloud with the group, or privately on paper if they prefer (or if the group is large). Pass out pencils and paper.
 - **Reinforce** the importance of: 1) setting an example by keeping the right kinds of foods in the house; 2) watching serving sizes by paying attention to the amounts of foods eaten; and 3) being active – adults need at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
 - **Acknowledge** the challenges parents face when trying to eat a variety of foods from the different food groups in the recommended amounts.
 - **Talk about** the parents’ responsibility for the kinds and amounts of food they serve to their children, and for being good role models for healthful eating and active living.
- 2. Distribute** the *MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You* mini-poster to each participant:
 - **Explain:** MyPyramid can help you choose the foods and amounts that are right for you, and offer the right foods for your child.
 - **Ask:** Look on the back of the *MyPyramid* page. It has information on food groups. What do you think it is saying about ways to be healthy? Probe to get responses such as:
 - Eating a variety of foods from within and among the food groups is important to being healthy.
 - You need more of some foods and less of others.
 - Being physically active is part of being healthy.
 - You can make choices for healthful eating and moving more, one step at a time.

Teaching Activities (continued)

- **Use** *MyPyramid: Steps to a Healthier You* **mini-poster** to show parents how much food is recommended for a 2,000 calorie diet.

Point out:

- MyPyramid’s six colorful bands represent the food groups, as well as oils.
- For each food group, you will see how much to eat if you need 2,000 calories a day. This amount may be right for some people, such as women who are physically active.
- To find the amounts of food you need, go to: www.mypyramid.gov.

- **Emphasize:** MyPyramid can help you in important ways:

- Make smart choices from every food group.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity (as discussed on the *MyPyramid* mini-poster).
- Get the most nutrition out of your calories.

- 3. Encourage parents** to identify actions they could take to prepare and serve meals or snacks that will meet the MyPyramid food group goals.

- **Ask** two volunteers to read aloud the script “Mom Discussing Family’s New Habits.”

- **Invite** parents to choose a phrase from the script they could agree with, and explain how they would make it work for their family.

“I decided to keep more fresh fruit on the counter.”

“I found some easy ways to add more vegetables to our meals.”

“My family agreed to make some changes, too.”

- **Ask:** During this next week, what can you do to prepare and serve meals or snacks with the types and right amounts of foods you need?

- **Explain:** The worksheet, *MyPyramid: My Steps to Healthier Eating*, has a place to write some easy steps to take to make sure specific types and adequate amounts of food are frequently prepared and served at meals or snacks.

- **Encourage** parents to commit to at least one action they will take, and then write it down.



Teaching Activities (continued)

- **Reinforce by saying:** Remember, it is up to you to keep several kinds of foods from each food group in your home. You are also a role model for healthy eating and being physically active for your children. Now you know some actions you can take to have healthful foods available for your family.

Talk to Parents One-on-One...

Often, talking with parents one-on-one about healthy eating and being physically active allows for more personalized advice. Discuss information of interest to them, including what steps they can take.

- 1. Find out** what parents do – and want to know -- about choosing food for a day. Ask:
 - How would you rate your overall food choices? (*Good, Fair, Need Help?*) Do you think you eat the right foods? In the right amounts?
 - What gets in your way of making better food choices? What makes it easier for you to choose the right foods?
 - What could you or your family do to make healthier food choices?
 - What would you like to learn that could help you make healthier food choices?
- 2. Share information** related to what parents want to know.
 - Go over the messages in the *MyPyramid: My Steps to Healthy Eating* worksheet. Focus on what parents want to learn about healthy eating.
 - Reinforce the importance of setting an example for their children by choosing the right foods, in the right amounts. Point out it is important to keep foods from all of the food groups available in the kitchen. That makes it easier to serve them as part of meals or snacks.
- 3. Help parents** set realistic goals and actions for healthful eating and being physically active.
 - Ask: What could you do to make better food choices for a day? Guide them so their actions are realistic for everyday meals and snacks. Have them pick one goal and write it on their worksheet.



Talk to Parents One-on-One... (continued)

—Ask: What actions can you take to meet your goal for making everyday food choices? Help the parents choose specific actions. For example, encourage them to make a fruit salad for the evening meal, or serve low-fat milk for everyone in the family to drink. Have the parents write at least one action to meet their goal on the worksheet.

4. **Encourage parents** to make these new actions a habit. Each action moves you closer toward a healthier you, and a healthier family.

At-Home Activities

As you talk with parents, suggest these activities.

- **Take time to talk about healthful eating ...** Suggest that parents use the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ *Grab Quick and Easy Snacks* activity sheet as a fun, educational way to spend time talking with their child about the importance of eating snacks from the different food groups. Each activity sheet is filled with simple tips for healthful eating for kids – and parents, too. Once the sheets are completed, kids can use them as placemats.

To view and download Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ activity sheets go to:

www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/collection/kids_activity.html



- **Steps towards eating for health ...** Encourage parents to learn more about healthy eating and being physically active, using on-line advice found on the MyPyramid web site. They can customize their own eating plan by clicking onto *MyPyramid Plan*. They can set personal goals, identify simple steps, and track their progress by clicking onto *MyPyramid Tracker*.

Parents can access MyPyramid through the Internet at home or at their local library: www.mypyramid.gov

Community Activities

- **Get air time ...** Planning a community, church, or school event? Use the Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ public service announcements (PSAs) to share simple tips for healthful eating and being physically active. Air them over the loudspeaker at food festivals, health fairs, parent nights, kids' sports events, concession stands, and more. Use them as recorded phone messages for your community center, church, or school. Offer them to local stores, fitness centers, WIC or food stamp offices, and other places where parents go. Contact your local radio stations about airing them, too.

Both recorded audio announcements and print scripts are available on-line.

To hear, view, and download:

www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard/Collection/collect_tools.html



Useful Resources

- **Additional Eat Smart. Play Hard.™ Resources**
www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhard
- **Additional Team Nutrition Resources**
www.fns.usda.gov/tn
- **Additional Federal Government Resources**
General and specific nutrition information is available from:
www.nutrition.gov
- **The Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion/USDA**
Find out about the *MyPyramid Food Guidance System*
www.mypyramid.gov
- **The Food and Nutrition Information Center/USDA**
Child Nutrition and Health Web sites
www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/etext/ooooo8.html

We want to hear from you! Share your success stories with the Food and Nutrition Service by sending news clippings, photos, and event descriptions to: eatsmartplayhard@fns.usda.gov

MyPyramid: My Steps to Healthier Eating Worksheet



MyPyramid.gov
STEPS TO A HEALTHIER YOU

GRAINS	VEGETABLES	FRUITS	MILK	MEAT & BEANS
For a 2,000 calorie diet, you need the amounts below from each food group. To find the amounts that are right for you, go to: www.mypyramid.gov				
Eat 6 oz. every day	Eat 2½ cups every day	Eat 2 cups every day	Get 3 cups every day	Eat 5½ ounces every day
Make Half Your Grains Whole	Vary Your Veggies	Focus on Fruits	Get Your Calcium Rich Foods	Go Lean with Protein
Select one food group from above. Write at least one action you will take to get the amounts and types of foods you need from that food group.				
Actions I will take...				